

4318 Student Use of Personal Wireless Communication Devices

The Wake County Board of Education recognizes that personal wireless communication devices are vital tools for parents/guardians to communicate with their children. Families may choose to equip students with personal wireless communication devices, for example, to facilitate transportation, ensure the safe location of children, and monitor health information. However, inappropriate use at school may challenge student engagement in classrooms and disrupt safe, orderly school environments.

The Board promotes digital literacy, citizenship, and agency as key factors in helping students make healthy choices about their learning and digital habits. The Board supports intentional, standards-based instruction that cultivates these student skills and fosters ethical digital behavior and effective learning as described in the North Carolina Digital Learning Standards for Students and policy 1610-7800 Professional Learning.

The Board also prioritizes the socioemotional health and well-being of students, safe, orderly schools, and engaging classroom environments conducive to learning. Accordingly, the Board seeks to minimize distraction and disruption for learners and teachers, including those brought about by inappropriate use of personal wireless communication devices and device accessories.

For the purpose of this policy, “wireless communication devices” are any portable wireless devices that have the capability to provide voice, messaging, or other data communication between two or more parties. Such devices may include, but are not necessarily limited to: cellular telephones, paging devices, two-way radios and similar devices, smartphones, smartwatches, smart glasses, tablet computers, laptop computers, gaming devices, and other such internet-accessing devices (whether by cellular, wired, or wireless connection). “Device accessories” may include items such as Bluetooth headphones, earbuds, and smartwatches that depend on a connection to a wireless communication device. Smartwatches may be worn and used as watches throughout the school day ~~by keeping them in airplane mode., but any features that require wireless connections to a smartphone (e.g., texting, Internet viewing, or phone calls) must be disabled when use of the wireless communication device is prohibited.~~

This policy does not apply to district-issued and managed devices.

A. Authorized Use

The Board supports clear expectations for student behavior. To promote student classroom engagement, prevent disruptions to safe, orderly school environments, and assist students in making healthy choices about their learning and digital habits, the Board establishes these parameters for the authorized student use of personal wireless communication devices during the school day.

1) All Schools

~~Students are permitted to possess personal wireless communication devices (and device accessories) at school but~~ Students must keep ~~them~~ wireless communication devices silenced and put away during the school day as defined by the school (e.g., between morning and afternoon bells, ~~between drop off and pick up, etc.~~). For the purpose of this policy, a device is “put away” when it is out of sight and not easily accessible (e.g., stored in a locker, backpack, or bag, ~~or pocket~~). Students may not display, use, or make ~~devices~~ visible during this time period unless one of these exceptions applies:

- a) Use of the personal wireless communication device during school hours is specifically authorized or required by a student’s individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan or by the individualized health plan (IHP) developed by school nursing staff for that student.
- b) The school administration has elected to allow teachers, through the development of a school-wide policy, to authorize such devices to be displayed, used, or made visible for instructional purposes during instructional time, provided that teachers supervise students during such use, and the use is consistent with the teacher’s authorization.
- c) School staff may, in their discretion, authorize brief use of a wireless communication device if there is a reasonable and legitimate need to communicate with someone outside the school during the instructional day. Students must ask for permission in advance and must honor any specific directions from staff regarding the duration or specific time of day for any such authorized use.

NOTE: No permission is required to call 911 emergency services when appropriate.

2) High Schools

In addition to the parameters above, the school administration may allow, through the development of a school-wide policy, such devices to be displayed, used, or made visible during specified non-instructional times during the school day, such as class transitions, lunch, and breaks, and the use is consistent with that authorization.

3) Buses

Although use is generally permitted before and after school, use of personal wireless communication devices may be regulated or prohibited on school buses by transportation or school staff when such devices interfere with the safe operation of the buses.

B. Consequences for Unauthorized Use

1) Confiscation

~~In addition to disciplinary consequences consistent with the Code of Student Conduct,~~ School staff are authorized to temporarily confiscate a student's personal wireless communication device if any of the following apply:

- The student does not **immediately** comply with this policy in response to directives of a school employee;
- The student has repeatedly violated this policy, and the student and parent/guardian have been notified that further violations may result in **immediate** confiscation of the wireless communication device, or
- The student's improper use of the device substantially disrupts school events or activities or interferes with other students' ability to focus on instruction or extracurricular programming.

In general, a confiscated device should be returned at the end of the class period, school event, or activity ~~when the device was improperly used~~. However, a school administrator may determine that a device will be confiscated until the end of the school day if the improper use is willful, repeated, substantially disruptive, or interferes with other students' ability to focus on instruction or extracurricular programming.

Additionally, a school administrator may require a parent/guardian, rather than the student, to recover a confiscated device if there is a pattern of violations during the same school year and the student and parent/guardian have been warned in writing that further violations may result in the device being held for pick-up by the parent/guardian.

Confiscated devices must be stored securely until the device is returned to the student or parent/guardian.

2) Discipline

~~Further,~~ As inappropriate student use of personal wireless communication devices may challenge student engagement in classrooms and disrupt safe, orderly school environments, and established parameters for authorized use of

such devices are set forth above, unauthorized student use of personal wireless communication devices may result in consequences under policy [4309 Student Behavior – Code of Student Conduct](#). Consistent with that policy, the specific consequences will depend in part on the specific conduct at issue. For example, unauthorized use of a personal wireless communication device to threaten, bully, or harass others may be subject to more serious disciplinary consequences under the applicable [Code of Student Conduct](#) rules on bullying, harassment, and threats, whereas merely possessing or using a wireless communication device without authorization will ordinarily be considered only a violation of Code of Student Conduct rule I-6 (Electronic Devices).

C. Search of Personal Wireless Communication Devices

In accordance with policy [4342 Student Searches](#), a student's personal wireless communication device and its contents, including, but not limited to, text messages and digital photos, may be searched whenever a school official has reason to believe the search will provide evidence that the student has violated or is violating a law, Board policy, the [Code of Student Conduct](#) or a school rule. The scope of such searches must be reasonably related to the objectives of the search and not excessively intrusive in light of the nature of the suspected infraction. Mere use of a personal wireless communication device in violation of this policy does not authorize a search of the device's contents.

D. Responsibility and Security

Students are personally and solely responsible for the security of their personal wireless communication devices. The school system is not responsible for the theft, loss, or damage of such devices.

E. Annual Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to provide necessary updates that reflect the Board's priority of providing safe, orderly learning environments that are conducive to learning and the evolving needs of students and parents/guardians.

Legal References: [G.S. 115C-36](#), [-390.2](#)

Adopted: